

Worksession

Agenda Item #	7
Meeting Date	September 22, 2008
Prepared By	Chief Ronald Ricucci
Approved By	Barbara B. Matthews City Manager

Discussion Item	Proposal to Obtain an Additional Police Dog
Background	<p>During most of the past decade, the Takoma Park Police Department (TPPD) has fielded two Police K-9 teams. Each team consists of an officer (handler) and the dog. The teams are assigned to the Operations Division, and the handlers perform all other duties associated with patrol officers.</p> <p>To date, all of the K-9 teams fielded by the TPPD have been cross trained in patrol K-9 functions (building searches, article searches, suspect tracks, missing persons tracks, and suspect apprehension), as well as in narcotics detection. Dogs and training have been purchased from a variety of vendors over the years, but most recently from Castle K-9 located in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. The costs of dogs and related K-9 training has risen steadily since 9/11 due to increased demand in the professional field.</p> <p>In addition to initial training, federal guidelines require a monthly in-service training program. To date, the TPPD has met this requirement utilizing the services of Castle K-9 at a current yearly cost of \$3,060 for the department's two dogs.</p> <p>Under the current configuration, only two of the four patrol teams benefit from the regular use of a police K-9 team; the other shifts must rely on mutual aid availability of K-9's, which automatically builds in a response delay for this tactical option. This sometimes contributes to decisions to forego the use of a K-9. This potentially jeopardizes officer safety in some situations and, in others, provides a diminished response capability of the agency in handling some individual crime situations.</p> <p>In January 2008, one of the department's two dogs was retired due to failing health. The department planned on replacing the retired K-9 and conducting initial training through Castle K-9 as had been done in the past. Additional funds (\$10,000) were requested in the applicable budgetary line item in the FY 2009 budget for this purpose. The quote subsequently obtained from Castle K-9 for the dog and initial four-week training is for \$11,000.</p> <p>The department has re-assessed its operational needs and now proposes to purchase two dogs--one as a replacement for the retired K-9 and a second dog to provide a third canine team. If the Council authorizes the purchase of an additional K-9, the department will avail itself of the option to train the new dogs and handlers through the Montgomery County Police K-9 program, at no cost to the City. The department has identified two vendors that will provide a dog to the City at a cost of \$5,900, for a total cost of \$11,800.</p>
Policy	The Council desires to provide the Police Department with the appropriate resources to perform its duties and to provide public safety services in an efficient and effective manner.

Fiscal Impact	<p>The cost to purchase two dogs is \$11,800. An additional vehicle will need to be outfitted at a cost of \$2,500. Initial veterinary bills and miscellaneous care and handling items equal \$1,000.</p> <p>The total start up costs for both of the proposed K-9 teams would be \$15,300. As noted in the background section, \$10,000 of additional funding was budgeted in the Operations Division in anticipation of this expenditure. Grant funding in the amount of \$4,987 is available to cover the remaining balance.</p> <p>An analysis of FY 2008 costs for food, boarding, and veterinary bills reflects an annual cost of \$2,836 per dog. These costs for two dogs have been routinely budgeted in the Operations Division budget.</p> <p>By participating in the Montgomery County Police K-9 Training Program, the department will save approximately over \$3,000 per year in training and travel costs. With these savings, departmental staff believes that the additional cost associated with having a third K-9 team can be accommodated with no modification to the department's approved operating budget.</p>
Attachments	None
Recommendation	Staff recommends that the Council approve the addition of a third K-9 team. In addition to offering professional development opportunities for patrol officers, a third team will provide increased coverage during the day, greater direct control over tactical decisions on usage of K-9 services in incidents in the City, and provide resources for the greater security of the broader community through mutual aid capability.
Special Consideration	The Police Department has indicated that it will likely seek Council approval for a fourth K-9 in the FY 2010 budget.